

Recommendations for Increasing Cultural Sensitivity in IPT for College Students (IPT-CS)



Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

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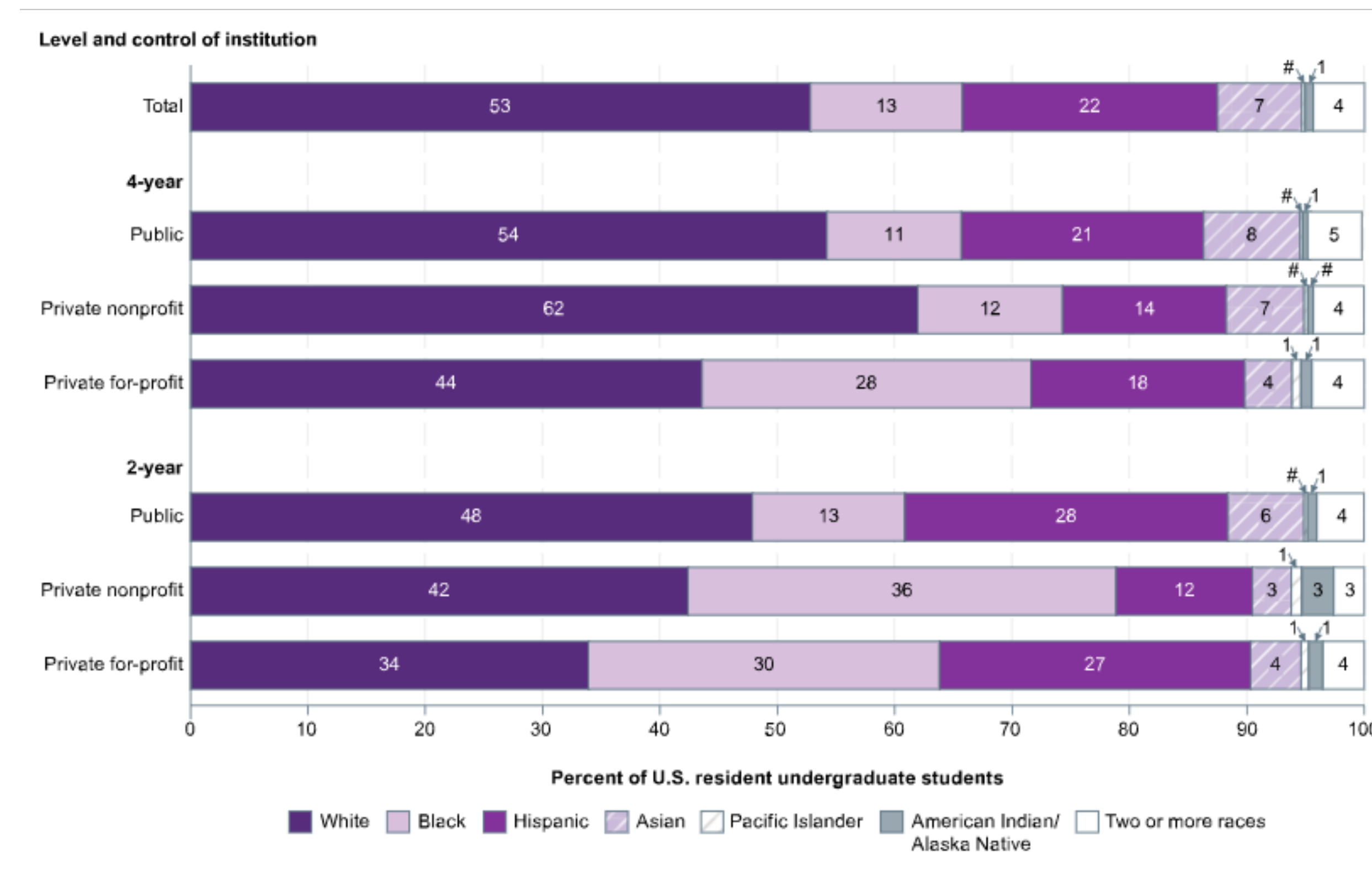
Introduction

- The mental health epidemic has been especially impactful among college populations. Since 2013, rates of mental health symptoms have skyrocketed.¹
- Despite these drastic increases in symptomatology, there has not been a compensatory increase in help-seeking behavior. Among those aged 18-25, 43.9% report unmet needs.²
- Students of minoritized identities are experiencing mental health concerns at elevated rates, with the COVID-19 pandemic contributing to increased vulnerability.^{1, 3-4}
- Interventions are needed to accommodate for the increasing diversity and mental health needs of college students.

The Present Study

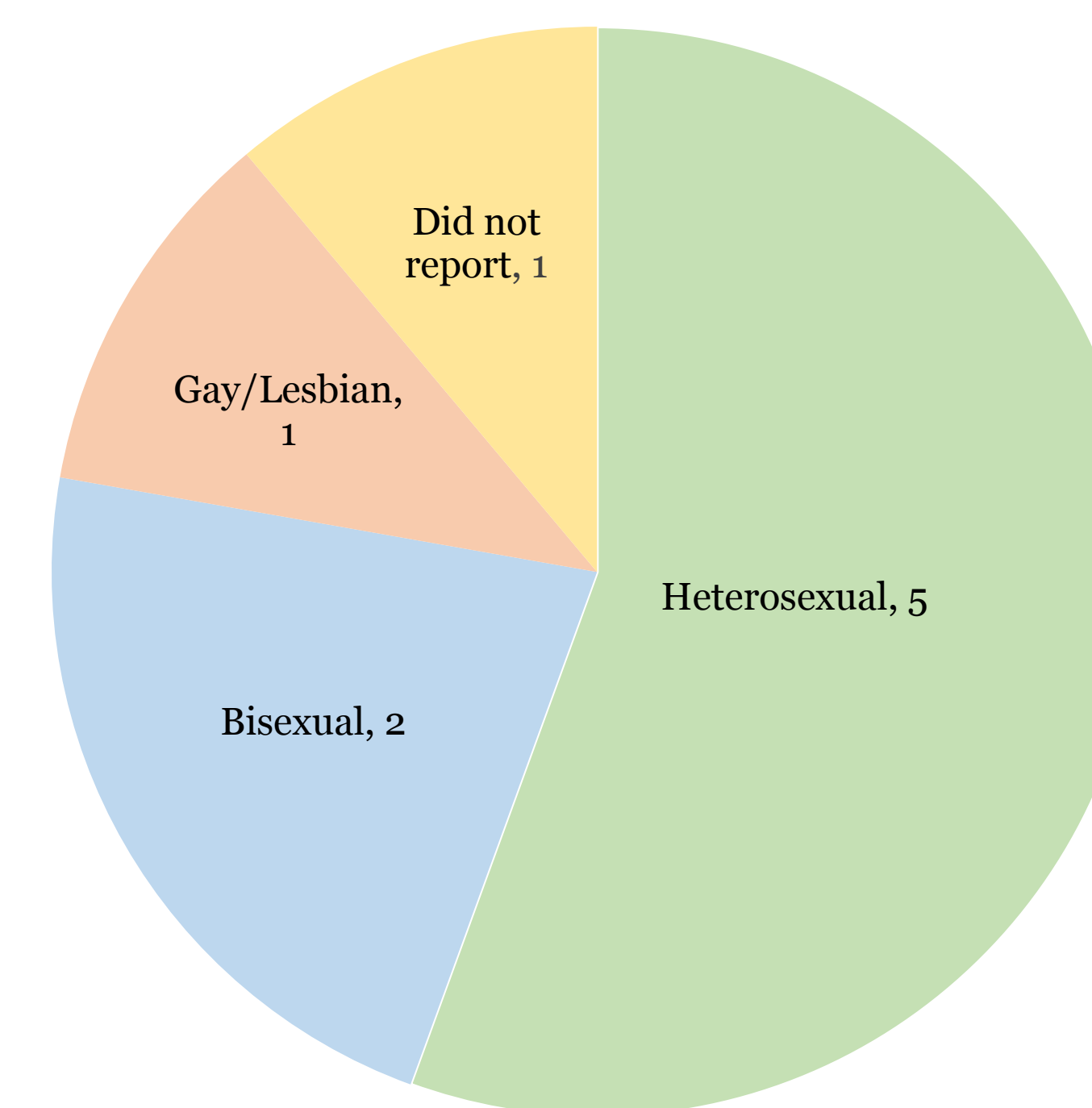
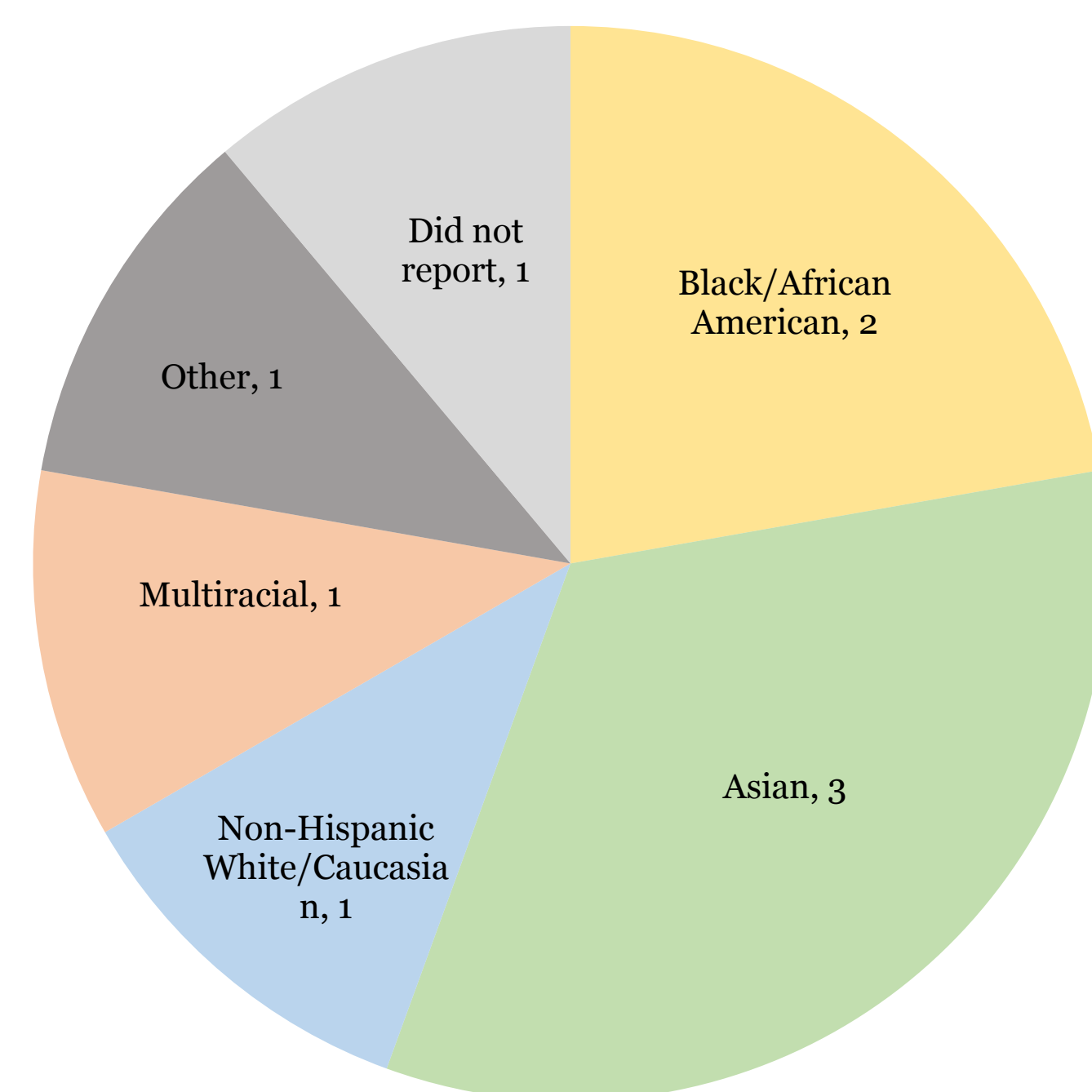
- The present study tested the feasibility and acceptability of a group-based, college student-adaption of IPT (IPT-CS).
- 18 eligible participants were randomized into IPT-CS or referral to usual care.
- Group demographics can be seen in Figures 2 and 3.
- Participants received a pre-intervention survey with a battery of assessments and demographics questions, weekly mental health assessments, and a post-intervention survey with the same assessments as well as open-ended questions about their experiences with the intervention.

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of U.S. resident undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution and student race/ethnicity: Fall 2020



Rounds to zero.
NOTE: Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Degree granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2021, Fall Enrollment component. See Digest of Education Statistics 2021, table 306.50.

FIGURE 2: SELF-REPORTED RACE/ETHNICITY FIGURE 3: SELF-REPORTED SEXUAL ORIENTATION



Recommendations for Future Practice

- Most frameworks for multi-cultural practice are geared towards relatively tight-knit communities.
- The multicultural orientation framework (MCO) is a better suited model because it can account for the wide variety of cultures present on college campuses.⁷
- MCO therapies are made of up three components: cultural humility, cultural opportunities, and cultural comfort.⁸

Cultural Humility

- Providers should acknowledge the limitations of their cultural awareness as different cultures may have conflicting views on mental health and the therapeutic relationship.⁹
- College students with diverse backgrounds face added stressors based on assimilation to the dominant culture and integration of their own identity.^{3-4, 10-11}
- Providers should ask about students' experiences related to their identities without making assumptions.

Cultural Opportunities

- Concealment of cultural identity during the therapeutic process is associated with negative outcomes.¹² Providers should ensure they explicitly recognize a client's identities when relevant over the course of therapy.
- Microaggressions are a common occurrence in group therapy with diverse clients and can harm group cohesion.¹³
- As the students in our sample mentioned enjoying the social aspects of group therapy, therapists should be aware of potential microaggressions, and the negative impact they can have on the therapeutic alliance and group cohesion.

Cultural Comfort

- Perceived cultural comfort of the therapist by clients is associated with greater decreases in distress.¹⁴
- Therapists can increase perceptions of cultural comfort by using the client's language, suggesting culturally-acceptable coping mechanisms, and specifically asking for feedback.
- Students in our sample frequently reported preferring direct advice to more general psychoeducation. Therapists should engage in open dialogue to ensure the metaphors and examples they use are culturally relevant.

Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT)

- IPT is a validated treatment developed for depression and has been applied to a variety of populations.⁵
- IPT's time-limited nature and focus on interpersonal functioning makes it an ideal intervention in college populations.
- Despite this, there is mixed evidence of IPT's effectiveness in diverse populations. Allan and colleagues⁶ outlined a comprehensive review of IPT's sensitivity to diverse cultures. Although social support facilitated through IPT may be applicable across cultures, other aspects such as the interpersonal focus areas may neglect salient stressors like discrimination.
- College students are unique not only because of their developmental stage but also because of the heterogeneity in this population. This project will provide recommendations for adapting IPT to accommodate these aspects.